



THE JOHNS HOPKINS CARES MOBILE SAFETY CENTER: A COLLABORATIVE CHILD SAFETY INITIATIVE

Did you know that more than 1,000 children in Baltimore are hospitalized each year as a result of an injury?

Background

On an average day in Baltimore, 3 children will suffer an injury serious enough to put them in the hospital¹. In an average year, 1 out of every 4 children in Baltimore – about 34,000 children – can be expected to see a doctor for an injury². That's the same as the number of people in Camden Yards for a typical Orioles game. In Baltimore, as in the rest of the country, injury is the leading cause of death for children¹.

Research conducted through the Center for Injury Research and Policy at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health has shown that children in low-income families in Baltimore City have an injury rate that is *twice* the national average³. Many of the injuries, especially burns from house fires or hot water, poisonings, drownings, falls, and traffic-related injuries, are preventable. Hopkins injury researchers have also found that combining education with improved access to safety products in a pediatric health care setting helped parents reduce their families' injury risks.⁴ Building on that success, the mobile safety center will bring education and safety products to the wider community. Formative research, including advice from parents and other child caregivers, indicated that Baltimore City families want more accessible injury prevention information, products and services.

The Johns Hopkins CARES Mobile Safety Center

The Johns Hopkins Center for Injury Research and Policy and the Baltimore City Fire Department, which has a strong history of community outreach and education, in partnership with many other organizations have created the Johns Hopkins CARES Mobile Safety Center. This 40-foot trailer brings life-saving information and low-cost safety products to families throughout Baltimore. Designed as a house-on-wheels, the mobile safety center shows the hidden injury risks lurking in every room in a typical home, and more importantly, how to prevent those injuries. CARES stands for Children ARE Safe, and that's the goal. ***The mission of the mobile safety center is to promote the safety of children and families by delivering fun, interactive education and affordable safety products to the community.***

The CARES mobile safety center contains a kitchen exhibit to highlight burn and poisoning risks, a bathroom display to focus on drowning, poisoning and fall hazards, stairs to demonstrate fall prevention, a car safety seat station, and a bedroom display. In the bedroom, visitors will experience what it's like when a fire breaks out -- an on-board smoke generator and a heating element that makes the door hot to the touch simulate what happens in a real house fire. Educators teach visitors both how to prevent fires, and how to prevent injury during a fire, including how to maintain smoke alarms and plan escape routes. Injury prevention experts from Johns Hopkins and from the Baltimore City Fire Department staff the center. Safety products, such as car seats, bike helmets, safety gates, and cabinet locks are available for sale at below-retail costs.

The mobile safety center began operating in July 2004 and continues to be a unique service for Baltimore communities. The mobile safety center visits pediatric clinics, local elementary schools, health fairs and community events.

Sponsors

The Johns Hopkins CARES Mobile Safety Center was made possible through the generous financial support from BP, our initial sponsor, the Federal Emergency Management Association, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, CareFirst, and two Baltimore foundations, Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Weinberg Foundation. In addition, members of the Partnership (listed below) donated their time and expertise. The Maryland Institute College of Art and the Maryland Science Center generously shared their creative expertise in developing graphics, logo, and exhibits. Today, the CARES Mobile Safety Center is funded by CareFirst, which allows this unique service to be continually offered to citizens of Baltimore City.

Evaluation

Through funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, the CARES Mobile Safety Center was evaluated in partnership with the Baltimore City Fire Department and the Johns Hopkins Community Physicians, East Baltimore Medical Center. Data on utilization of the mobile safety center, visitor reactions, and changes in knowledge, beliefs and safety practices were monitored over time. Of visitors surveyed on the Center, 94% reported that they “learned a lot” from their visit and 100% would recommend the Center to a friend.

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To schedule a visit from the mobile safety center or for more information, please email cares@jhsph.edu or call Project Director, Kira McGroarty, 410-955-4121.

¹ Injuries in Baltimore City, Center for Injury Research and Policy, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Johns Hopkins University, November 2002.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/childh.htm>, last accessed, 7/16/04

³ Bishai D, McCauley J, Trifiletti LB, McDonald EM, Reeb B, Gielen AC, The Burden of Pediatric Injury in an Urban Medicaid Managed Care Organization, Ambulatory Pediatrics, 2:279-283, 2002.

⁴ Gielen AC, McDonald EM, Wilson MEH, Hwang WT, Serwint JR, Andrews JS, Wang MC, The Effects of Improved Access to Safety Counseling, Products and Home Visits on Parents’ Safety Practices, Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, 156:33-40, 2002